

## 7 Ways to lead unleadable people



After less than four years in his church, the pastor’s frustration bubbled over in a brief, but pointed e-mail.

“I am so frustrated, I am ready to leave this church and the pastorate altogether,” he said. “The church members are unleadable.”

Although I didn’t think I could find “unleadable” in the dictionary, I knew what this pastor meant. While he led a well-established church, in a relatively short time he felt incredibly frustrated.

### **Meeting with resistance**

From his perspective, members met every initiative he launched with resistance. Members were more concerned about their preferences and needs than reaching the community around them with the gospel. Some responded with anger and overt negativity, while others displayed passive-aggressive behavior.

No matter what their stance, all of them were frustrating the pastor. What is the solution to leading unleadable people? I do not have a “cookie-cutter” approach, nor a quick-fix solution, but I can tell you what I’ve learned from other leaders in similar situations. I can relate some of the success stories of leaders who have been moved from frustration to celebration.

## Seven solutions

Allow me, then, to share with you seven ways to lead unleadable church members.

1. **Pray for those members.** Make it a point to pray for them by name. Pray for God's work and blessings in their lives. Pray for their families. And pray that God will give you a greater love for them regardless of their responses.
2. **Pray for your own attitude.** A leader's attitude is contagious, whether it's positive or negative. Church members can discern pretty easily a leader's disposition. Sometimes, the negative attitude of the leader exacerbates a difficult situation.
3. **Mentor one or two of the more recalcitrant members.** You don't have to use the word "mentor." You can just start spending more time with one or two of the tougher cases. Take them on ministry visits with you. Share informally your heart for the church. Get to know them better.
4. **Demonstrate consistent ministry to these more recalcitrant members.** Don't avoid them because you don't like them. But, also, don't give them disproportionate ministry time simply because they complain. You don't want to reinforce negative behavior.
5. **Organize a quality new members' class.** The idea is to establish clear expectations of new members on the front end. They will then likely influence other members in the church.
6. **Get influencers in the church to help you.** They may or not be the people in key positions in the church. They are the ones that, when they speak, everyone listens. Share with them your passions. See if they can be a positive influence on the more immovable members.
7. **Be persistent.** Some of the greatest missionaries around the world did not see ministry fruit for a decade or so. But they persisted, and God has blessed their labors. Leaders of established churches should view themselves as missionaries on the field. And they must be willing to be patient and persistent. Earlier research I led showed that the greatest fruit in a pastor's ministry typically occurred in year five or later of tenure.

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